

VINDEX ANGLICUS;
OR,
THE PERFECTIONS
OF THE
ENGLISH
LANGUAGE.

Defended, and asserted,



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The perfections of the English Language
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Amongst all things requisite to noble actions, I never saw
scarcely recounted, neither can I acknowledge it due from
to excell a creature to man; to any but the eternall ma-
jesty of his Creator. Which consideration makes me adventure
the hazard of many censures, resolving to account those slender
scars they shall be able to inflict upon me in this attempt, as cha-
racters of honour, descyphering to every ingenuous eye my love
to my Country. Whatever ensue, it will suffice me with content e-
nough, if my honest endeavour serve as an incitement to some
more able pen, to handle such a worthy though almost neglected
subject, as is the Patronage of our truly excellent Language.

I seeke not to compass any such miracle as to convince the
prepossessed judgements of forraigners, but shall thinke to retreat
with victory enough, if I can but foyle those unnaturall dome-
stiques, who degenerately do either with a certaine fond affected
Idolatri adore the Language of other nations, contemning their
owne; or else imperiously (as if censors in this particular) doe
adde, detackt, mangle and transforme her, according to their
weake fancies; vainely spoyling the best of vulgar Languages.
I will not stick to avouch it a *Language*, though that very affir-
mation be a received *Paradox*; nor will I blush to parallell it
with the best of the minor Languages.

And to make it good, I will not deduce it from *Babels* confu-
sion, for truly I believe it had a nobler beginning: neither will I
trafficke with *Scaliger* so farre for it as *Persia*, or *Chersonesus*:
seeing I looke upon such deductions, as learned fantasies conducting
little to prove our antiquity, neither needfull; since we together
with our Language are extracted from the Germans, whose title
is so glorious in that kinde, that the rest of Europe gives place un-
to them. There are two maine objections which seeme to exclude

us from the title of a Language, our *Mutability* and *Mixture*, happy faults; and so universall that I presume the best of our opponents are hardly free from: though (it may be) not equally guilty of, for I confesse our *mutability* to be more frequent, yet choyce then theirs; and our composed mixture consisting of greater variety, yet accompanied with more purity & felicity. The *Italian* is compounded of *Latine*, *Barbarous Greeke*, and *Gothish*; The *French* of *Latine*, *Dutch*, and the old *Gallique*; The *Spanish* of *Latine*, *Gothish*, and *Morisco*; *Germany* hath a taste of the *Romane Empire*, and her bordering neighbours; if I be not deceived in us you may discover all these with advantage; yet their purest expression fitly seated, and separated from their Barbarismes, which by others are swallowed together with the rest. All of them are so mutable that our frequency is excusable: Nay, Mixture and mutability are things so naturall to Languages, that none but the *Hebrew* (if that) are free from them.

What is become of the ancient *Latine*, used in the reignes of *Latium* and *Carmenta*; or in the times of the *Tarquinius*, or *Decemviri*; nay, or under the very Consuls or Emperours, if bookes did not conserve it? the same question may we make unto the *French*, *Spanish*, the latter *Italians*; and *Germans* also: Though *Beccanus* would make us beleve wonders of their antiquity, immutability, and the hidden *Cabala* or mysteries contained in their Language, like as in the *Hebrew*, to which by his account it is not inferiour in age, he deriving it even from the dayes of *Adam*. Which perfection supposed true, we also might partly lay hold of, as a branch of the same tree. But

— *Credat Judaeus Apella, non ego*:

Let him that please beleve the same,

For I the fable quite disclaime.

For my part I beleve, that what the learner Physicians pronounce of humane bodyes, how that they are by time often renewed; excrefcions, cold, heat, sicknesse, wounds, & sweat, consuming the present and giving place to new substance, may be said of Languages altered by every age; and as posterity hath given place to us, so we shall yeild to our antiquity, not onely in our lives and fortunes, but our Language also.

By this time I hope you will grant us the name of a Language, and stay us no more upon the simple terme of *Speech*; wherefore now will I direct my selfe against those admirers of forraigne

tongues; sieghring their owne, inferiour to none of them in true excellency: none I presume will deny the perfection of a Language to consist in *facility, copiousnesse, sweetnesse, and significance*, in all which if I can make good that our Language is equall, if not superiour to the rest, I hope he must be very farre transported with passion, and deeply factious that will not assent unto me.

The great *facility* of our Language is evident by a double demonstration. The ease wherewith others commit ours to memory; and the singular helpe which it affords us to the attaining of others. Our Monosyllables, & the exemption we have from *flexions*, (whereunto most others are incident) doe greatly facilitate ours; which though some may reckon as a defect, I will esteeme a blessing, accounting that multiplicity of *cases, genders, modes and senses* (which puts us to schoole to learne our mother tongue) the Emblems of *Babels* curte, and confusion. For our facility in learning others, let us renew but the old observation; Turne an ingenious *Englishman* into what Country soever, and quickly you shall for the most part see him profit so well, that his speech will little or nothing differ from the genuine *dialect*, of what Language soever is there used by the natives; no common priviledge.

Our *Copiousnesse* I need not use much art to demonstrate, for besides the treasures of the ancient *Dutch* which we retaine in our *Saxon* monosyllables, the choyce wits of our nation, have fetcht hither the very *Quintessence* of those other Languages; and by their excellent industry so happily improved our English soyle, that I dare safely affirme many of those forraigne scyons beare better, and more plentifully then in their former climate. The *Latins* and *French* are defective in the expression of many words which we utter with ease, and they have none wherunto our ability extendeth not: our abundance ends not here. We have *Court*, and *Country English*, *Northerne*, and *Southern Dialects*, which differ not onely in pronunciation, but also in words, and termes. There is no Language can deliver a matter with more variety then ours, plainly by *Synonymas*, or by circumlocution with *Metaphors*: which any mean judgement will instance with sundry examples. We almost equallise the *Greeks*, and even exceed the *Latines* in a peculiar grace of compounding many words together, which is one of the greatest beauties can be in a Language.

Our *significancy* and abilities in expression, in the severall parts
both

both letters, words, and phrases, is very eminent, in number, and use of letters we exceed both *Greeks, Latines, French and Italians*: our words are incomparably significant, inasmuch that many of them have foure or five severall significations. Our interjections are so fit for the expression of our passions, that they seeme to be derived from the very nature of our severall affections; when many of those of other tongues are almost ridiculous. What variety dorth any other nation bragge of that we have not almost with equall felicity made our owne? *The Italian Courtier*, the *French Salust*, the *Spanish Guzman*, the *Latine Naso*, and the *Greeke Polybins*: who would read that matchlesse essay of Mr *Sandys*, upon the *Aeneids*, and would not thinke it writ so by the peetlesse *Maro* himselfe: how properly hath the renowned *Lord Bacon* taught us to speake the termes of Art in our own Language? we judged it impossible, till we saw it performed; which difficulty when I see overcome, makes me despaire of nothing. What matchlesse and incomparable peeces of eloquence hath this time of *Civill warre* afforded? came there ever from a Prince pen such exact peeces as are His Majesties *Declarations*? Were there ever speeches uttered in better Language, or sweeter expressions, then those of the noble and Learned *Lord Digby*, and some other worthy Personages? did ever nation expose choycer more honourable or eloquent discourses, then ours hath done in our *Soveraignes* behalfe, since these unhappy divisions? There is no sort of verse either ancient, or Modern which we are not able to equall by Imitation, we have our English *Virgil, Ovid, Seneca, Lucan, Juvenal, Martial, and Catullus*: In the *Earle of Surry, Daniell, Johnson, Spencer, Donne, Shakespeare*, and the glory of the rest *Sandys*, and *Sydney*. We have eminent advantages of all other vulgar Languages in Poetry. The *Italian* is so full of vowels, that he is ever cumbred with *Elyfions*. The *Dutch* with consonants, that his verse are sicke of the *Sciatica*; The *French* cannot afford you foure words whose accent are in the *Antepenultima*, and therefore unfit for *Dactils*, which the accent and meter do so naturally square with us, that in both we deservedly beare the prize from all the rest. The *Spanish* and *Italian* want our *caesura* in the midst of the verses, the *Italian* cannot afford you a *masculine* rime: nor the *French* make meter of the *Antepenultima*, and yet there is not any of the three Syllables whereunto our ability extendeth not.

The *sweetness* of our Language I doubt not to compare with any vulgar whatsoever, let us put it to the tryall and compare it with others. The *Italian* I confesse is an excellent, Princely, and pleasant Language, upon which the best judgements looke with great respect: yet it wants sinews, and passes as a silent water. The *French* is truly delicate, but too affected and effeminate. The *Spanish* majesticall, but terrible & boisterous. The *Dutch* manly, but very harsh. Now we in borrowing from each of them give the strength of consonants to the *Italian*, the full found of syllables to the *French*, the variety of termination with milder accents to the *Spaniard*, and dissolve with more facility the *Dutch* vowels, like bees gathering their perfections leave their drosse to themselves: So when substance combineth with delight, plenty with delicacy, beauty with majesty, and expedition with gravity, what can want to the perfection of such a Language?

—omitte mirari beata.

Fumus, et opes, strepitumque Roma.

Admire not then the smoky fume,

The wealth and traine of mighty *Rome*.

For one of our great wits (who understood most Languages in *Europe*) affirms, that in uttering sweetly, and properly the conceits of the minde, which is the end of Speech, we parallell any other tongue in the world: and that our Language is such, that externall looking upon is now may deservedly say.

Ipsa suis pollens opibus, nihil indiga nostri.

She now abounds in proper store,

And stands in need of us no more.

Certainly the mixture of our extractions from others, joyned with our owne monosyllables, make up such a perfect harmony: that so you may frame your speech majesticall, pleasant, delicate, or manly according to your subject, and exactly represent in ours, whatsoever grace any other Language carrieth. Yet let none thinke that I stand in any competition with the sacred *Hebrew*, learned *Greeks*, or fluent *Latines*, or claime a superiority over the rest; my ambition extends not so high, though you see I want not preference for it. Let us looke upon our owne as a Language, equall to the best of vulgar, and for my part,

Let others retain their ancient dignity and esteem.

Upon faire termes I have ended the controversy, and must now begin a fiercer combat against a second enemy.

Morbes

Mosher and *Cankers*, who with their shallow inventions and silly fancies, must still be engrafting new coyned words in our *English* nursery, without either art or judgement. I seeke not to discredit their worthy and immortall labours, who with unmatched industry, have fetcht hisher the best inhabitants of other climates, and made them *denizens* in our *Colonies*: those who with a skilfull felicity have bought, brought, or borrowed, the richest ornaments of other Languages to make ours abound with plenty, and variety; but those I disclaime, who when the worke is excellently performed already, must still be fingring; and when the Quintessence and life of other tongues are ours already, must now trafficke for the dregges, to the end they may be said to have done somewhat.

Languages as all other mortall things have their infancy, and age; their waxe and wane; the states where they are used are the Loadstars,

Ad cuius numen, motumque moveri.

At whose motion or command

They climbe, decline, or make a stand.

With their prosperity and adversity they for the most part rise, and fall, which the best of Languages can largely testify, who had they not even miraculously by providence, been hitherto conserved in books, had long since perished, & been buried in the dust of oblivion; they being now as strange to their owne birth places, as to us. Our Language hath long been in the ascendent together with our monarchy, & at last by excellent artists is even brought to the height, which already our over-diligent and intruding spirits, with their botching seeke to bring to the wane.

God grant it prognosticate no greater ruine, it is an evill symptome of further detriment.

Notwithstanding I hope it is no inevitable destiny, but that our Language & Empire, shall yet enjoy a far long noon, & not so soon pass towards the *west*, let these busie creatures be checked and restrayned from such presuming liberties, and no doubt but it will be a soveraign antidote, to maintaine the splendor of the *English* Language in the *Meridian* of purity a long time, which these active persons stain and obscure.

How ridiculous if well considered is the merchandise they seeke to seeke to sell for currant,

Let me afford you a few examples, and I am deceived if they will not move both your anger, and laughter, read and censure. *Adpugne, Algale, Adspinate, daffe, desuff, depen, Brochity, Bulbitate, ex-*
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torque, vbrilate, Capriom, Contrast, Catillate, Framate, Freyer, Imporcate, Invenabe, incasse, Gingreate, Glabretall, Halitate, Ligurization, Lurcate, Kemand, Mephitick, Mirminodized, Obsalutate, Ombation, Nixiom, Naustible, Plumative, Prodigity, Pushation, Raption, Rereft, Rumarize, Sudate, Soloflick, Sracoue, Subgrund, Tridiculate, Triffull, Wadshaw, Xanticall, Texate, Vitulate, Vndosow, Vambrast, Zoografe.

A thousand other so unnaturall phrases, that they cause a loathing in a curious and judicious eye. These and such as these; that set up mints for such base coyn would I have the *Arts* to persecute & not suffer them to mix their counterfeited stufte amongst our pure ingredients so to canonize them for currant. Our Language is copious enough already; we need traffick no more to enrich it; at least not so oft. for yet I will not deny, but some pearle or other may be left behinde uncheaped by our former factors, which is worth the buying, yet would I have it naturalized here with judgement, and authority.

Let us improve what graine we have already, and we shall finde it full as much as is needfull, or at least as much as our soyle is well able to beare. Let us not therefore with a base and busie avarice, abuse our Language with the dregges of others, being possessed with the perfections of them all already, for by enfranchising, refining, and implanting strange, old, and new words it is happily become even the prince of all the vulgar; from the dignity of which nothing hath so much detracted, as our owne vaine affecting, admiring and applauding forraigne tongues above measure: which makes strangers judge our owne contemptible. Our separation from the continent world doth make our Language insular, which is one cheife reason of its want of esteeme amongst forraigners, they scarce having use of it; few of them frequenting our climate, and we swarming into theirs. Though some of the wisest of them now acknowledge the worth of it, and with envy looke upon the perfection of our Language, as well as upon the excellency of our Country.

Though in this conclusion I here strike sayle, and vaile to the learned Languages, let that not detract from the worth of ours, which is parallel, if not Superiour to the best remaining: it is as *courteous* as the *Spanish*, and *courtlike* as the *French*, as *amorous* as the *Italian*, and as *fluent* as any; wherefore thinke me not overweighed with affection, if I beleive the most renowned of other nations, to have laid the very *Elixir* of their tongues perfection in trust with our *Island*.

FINIS.